

## **Rebranding of Financial Aid – Requirement per E2SHB 2021**

### Implementation Discussion

Although institutions may develop their own responses to the requirements, the purpose of this discussion is to share ideas and concepts, as well as to consider how, over the long term, this may be blended into an information and marketing campaign to promote aspiration for post-secondary education and student aid financing opportunities. We also wish to discuss the potential to use a “graphic design” approach to meet the requirements.

### Background

- Washington makes a significant investment in student aid. For the 2009-11 biennia over \$500,000,000 will be appropriated for student aid programs and activities.
- For a few years prior to the 2009 session, some Legislators expressed the opinion that:
  - There are too many student aid programs and that the number and complexity of programs (state, federal, and institutional) was in itself a barrier to access.
  - Students and families were generally unaware of the significant contribution that the state makes toward student aid.
- As early as the 2007 session, a bill (HB 2072) was introduced, but not passed, proposing among other things, that the HECB review “the level of understanding” of available financial aid and requiring the Board to propose providing easy access to high quality financial aid information.
- The application procedure for the SNG and SWS programs utilizes the FAFSA and is coordinated with both federal and institutional aid application processes. This effectively makes it unnecessary for a student to even know the names of the two largest need-based programs in order to fully apply for the benefits. Thus, students may not be aware they have applied for and received state funding.
- In at least two biennial budgets the HECB proposed a significant information outreach and marketing effort to promote access to higher education and financing sources. Neither request was funded.
- Information outreach and marketing are concepts that are also in the HECB’s Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education and may be part of the current system re-design discussions.

### Legislative Intent of E2SHB 2021 (paraphrased)

The legislature finds that a myriad of financial aid programs exist. It is the intent of the legislature to promote and expand access to state financial aid programs and fully supporting broad access programs and to designate all existing financial aid an opportunity pathway, with the effect of providing students with a clear understanding of available resources to pay for postsecondary education, thereby increasing access.

It is the intent of the legislature that the HECB, SBCTC, OSPI, WTECB, and institutions coordinate the development of outreach tools, such as a web-based portal, for information on all opportunity pathway aid programs. The information should be communicated in a format and manner that provides an ease of understanding for students and their families and include other pertinent information on institutions of higher education, costs, and academic programs. It is also the intent for institutions of higher education to incorporate this information in promotional materials to prospective and current students and their families.

- In HECB testimony on HB 2021, the Board noted that developing an intuitive and recognizable branding of student aid programs will require an effective statewide marketing campaign to promote better understanding and recognition that financial aid is available and college is accessible.

#### What the HECB is required to do (effective immediately)

Amending RCW 28B.76.500, the Board will label each program “opportunity pathway” including “all communication materials, including, but not limited to, printed materials, presentations, and web content”. This includes any “portal” for student aid or higher education information and planning.

#### What the Public Institutions are required to do (effective 2010-2011)

The existing statute (RCW 28B.15.0681) is amended directing public institutions to disclose to resident undergraduates that the difference between the full cost of instruction and tuition and fees is paid by state tax funds.

- *Difference between tuition and full cost of instruction*

Beginning in 2010-11 the state-funded difference shall be labeled an “opportunity pathway” on the tuition billing statement.

- *Financial aid awards*

Financial aid awarded to resident undergraduate students shall be labeled “opportunity pathway” on the tuition billing statement or the financial aid award letter (except aid granted outside of the package or federal loans).

- Includes all other types of aid
- Source, amount, eligibility or obligations are not changed
- Statements may be customized

Tuition billing statements shall be in 12 point type and bold where appropriate.

Tuition billing statements or financial aid award notifications must notify resident undergraduate students of federal tax credits for which they may be eligible.